

KING CAESAR HOUSE

Fragments of the Past: A Shipbuilder's World

The restoration of the Frederick T. Potter Museum located in the King Caesar House was begun in July with the active support and encouragement of the executive committee, and DR&HS president Judy Hall along with the physical and creative efforts of Campbell Waterhouse.

The intention of the project was to design the museum space to reflect the life and times of the shipbuilding and merchant sailing trade of Duxbury, during the years 1800 to 1850. The intent was to restore and expand the original design which was conceived and created by the efforts of Frederick T. Potter in 1978.

The project began with the cleaning and painting of the walls and staining of the new woodwork. Once completed, the task at hand was locating the artifacts that were on display in the original exhibit of 1978. The artifacts included a grand collection of shipbuilding tools, various artifacts which would return aboard ship to America, a picture gallery that included portraits of Duxbury ship captains, Duxbury built vessels, a hand drawn map depicting the world as was known in 1829, and of most particular interest an original map of England, Scotland and Ireland detailing 4 voyages of Captain Gershom Bradford of Duxbury, one of which tracks, with hand written notes, his course from St. Petersburg, Russia back to Boston in 1802.

The exhibit was also expanded to include collages of historic artifacts, one which consisted of architectural drawings of the King Caesar House, detailing its expansion in 1840, combined with a wooden model of the skeletal structure of the house as it was designed in the fashion of the Federal period. As one continues through the museum past the architectural collage one comes upon another collage which depicts a different story, that of the hardships of losing family members to the numerous shipwrecks that occurred on their long voyages to distant lands.

During the peak of its success, 1820 to 1840, the sailing vessels and sailors of Duxbury were internationally known for their expert craftsmanship and seamanship. Ezra Weston Jr., or King Caesar, as he was affectionately referred to, was considered the largest shipbuilder in America and the largest ship owner in the world. Duxbury was an extremely important, busy and strategic sailing community for the new independent colonies of New England.

For more information regarding hours of operation and coming events, call the DR&HS at 934-6106.